

Testimony on H.B. No. 5444  
Education Committee Public Hearing  
March 14, 2018

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

Once again, implementation of the Student Data Privacy Act is under attack. H.B. No. 5444 "An Act Concerning Revisions to the Student Data Privacy Act" threatens to derail the provisions of this act that the legislature passed in 2016. This Act was passed after several years of consideration and its implementation was postponed by the legislature last session. Adding new members to this year-long Task Force will only serve to further slow walk implementation of this much-needed and long overdue Act that protects student privacy rights that has already been passed by the legislature. Students, their parents, and concerned citizens need to start protecting our students NOW.

Public schools across the State (and country, for that matter) are trying to figure out the appropriate role for computers in the instruction of our students. Most have moved forward in an unorganized manner incorporating programs and apps that different teachers have found useful. Unfortunately, they have done so without giving much consideration to the less savory aspects of technology's intrusion into this unprotected space. Student data privacy has not been carefully examined as technology use in schools has exploded and students need to be protected.

The Cheshire Public Schools have responded to parental concerns about student data privacy and the excessive use of computer instructional playlists (or platforms) with their children in the classroom by temporarily suspending the privately-owned and Mark Zuckerberg-promoted Summit Personalized Learning Platform. There is much disagreement between the district school superintendent and concerned parents, however, as to whether the district is meeting current data privacy protection laws.

I find it deeply troubling that an organization, such as the CT Association of Boards of Education - in their written testimony - is calling for further postponement until July 2019. For an organization that is supposed to guide school district leadership on education issues, it is remarkable that CABE is looking out for the needs of vendors who provide electronic instructional programming more so than the needs of students who have been having their private, personal information made available without their permission to private business interests.

All students in school and their parents need protection from such egregious overreach and this law, once implemented, will provide further clarification and guidance to who is entitled to access of student data. I hope that you will push back and support that implementation of the overdue Student Data Privacy Act so that it can be implemented as currently scheduled this July 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

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